OCTOBER 1958

The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

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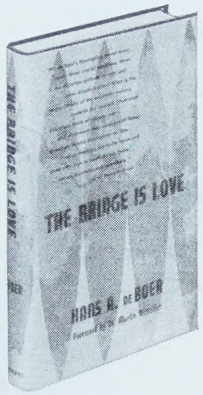

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BOOK REVIEW

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Reformation Day 1958

With regard, then, to the obtaining of Righteousness before God, I say that we must necessarily hold the following five points concerning Faith: — First, that it is an undoubting persuasion, by which we receive the word brought by Prophets and Apostles as truth sent from God. Secondly, that what it properly looks to in the Word of God is the free promises, and espescially Christ, their pledge and foundation, so that, resting on the paternal favour of God, we can venture to entertain a confident hope of eternal salvation. Thirdly, that it is not a bare knowledge which flutters in the mind, but that it carries along with it a lively affection, which has its seat in the heart. Fourthly, that this faith does not spring from the perspicacity of the human mind, or the proper movement of the heart, but is the special work of the Holy Spirit, whose it is both to enlighten the mind and impress the heart. Lastly, that this efficacy of the Spirit is not felt by all promiscuously, but by those who are ordained to life.

—From *The True Method of Giving Peace to Christendom and Reforming the Church* by John Calvin

Calvinists and Democrats

by Lester DeKoster

HE WHO ENTERS upon the discussion of politics is commonly forewarned that such discussion often generates more heat than light. The precept of caution is to leave the subject strictly alone.

But we all know that the duty of making political choice confronts each citizen who contemplates seriously the responsibilities of citizenship. For most Americans, in this year 1958, the range of effective political choice lies between the two major political parties, Republicans and Democrats. It is to this situation that the following discussion is oriented, laying aside for the time the possibility of other alternatives.

No party, major or minor, has a monopoly on the virtues, nor on the vices, of political program and conduct. It is this fact which freights political decision heavily with problems, and requires of the citizen thoughtful and persistent pursuit of the issues as change and circumstance shift focus and perspective.

But one is surprised, if not dismayed, to discover that amid conditions so complex as those of the twentieth century, there are Christians who quite sincerely assume that a Christian commitment does not stimulate discussion of the issues which divide the two major parties but, on the contrary, settles it. This assumption comes to expression in such a question, asked rhetorically as if the answer were foregone, as "*How* can *you*, as a Christian, be a Democrat?"

A number of replies rise in one's mind in response to this query; and one of these is the subject of the article which follows. Orthodox Christianity, as coming to expression in Calvinism, does not, I believe, prohibit support of the general aims and achievements of the Democrats, nor does it necessarily settle one in Republicanism. Rather, I shall suggest that there is, in fact, much in the political history and practice of Calvinism which exhibits remarkable affinity to the history and practice of the Democratic Party, particularly in that area where the state and economic life inter-act.

This article is offered as an introduction to discussion. The issues which the world faces today are grave, "sicklied o'er" with the pale cast of tragedy, and demanding the best of time and consideration that we can give them. The problems I wish to mention are domestic problems, arising out of economic and political relationships. They are less dramatic, perhaps, than international tensions, but affect us all more intimately so long a peace endures.

I must make clear at once, and shall repeat, tha I have no desire to suggest that acting as a Chris tian in political affairs implies that one will be, c must be, the member of either major party. No do I wish to suggest that the attempt to bring Ca vinism to bear upon political decision will aut matically rule out — or rule in — one party or th other. I am simply trying to formulate thos thoughts which stir in my mind, as no doubt the do in the minds of many others, when the questio troubled, or indignant, or even with some sensib condescension, comes, "How can you, as a Chri tian, be a Democrat?"

In reply, let me first state briefly

The Thesis

The summary answer can be made in two point (1) Admitting at once that history wears ma faces and allows of many interpretations, I neve theless think to discern that Calvin and Calvinis have stood, in the large, for the positive inte vention of the state in the social and econom life of the people for the promotion of the gener welfare. And I think it true that this state inte vention did not destroy capitalistic enterprise, b rather has tended to curb its abuses and to u fold its potentialities; for the development of ca italism and the spread of Calvinism went ha in hand. (2) This selective and controlled int vention of the state in the social and economic l of the nation, not to transform nor to destr capitalism but rather to discipline and to devel it, has been, as I understand and endorse it, t overall program of the Democratic Party, and b the intent and result of much legislation devis sponsored, and in large measure enacted by Dem crats. Nay more, hardly an original legislat enactment designed *to promote positively* t *spread* of prosperity *under capitalism* has be devised, sponsored, and enacted by any other litical party, on the national level, since the da of Theodore Roosevelt.

Placing these two historical phenomena side side—Calvinism in politics, and the achieveme of the Democratic administrations of our gen ation— does *not* lead me to conclude that non-De ocrats are non-Calvinists, *nor* does it imply t Republicans are fuzzy on their Calvinism or c loyal to their faith. But I am led to contend t

upport of the main outlines of the Democratic program has been, and is, by no means out of ine with historic Calvinism; but, rather, is quite clearly in the spirit of Calvin's Geneva, in the radition of the Puritan-Calvinists of Scotland, England and New England, and in harmony with he program of our Calvinistic brethren in Holand across the sea.

This is my thesis. On it, among other footings, may one stand, I think, who is proud to be known both as a spiritual descendent of Calvin and as a supporter of much of the Democratic program.

What Does Party Membership Mean?

The relation of the state to the socio-economic ife of the nation is, of course, but one aspect of politics, though I think that it lends much to heat, f not light, when politics come under discussion. But one might well ask, what does it *mean to "belong"* to a political party at all, in the USA, 1958?

To those whose sorties into the poitical wilds consist of hasty and covert annual excursions into he polling booth, "being" a Democrat, or Republican, probably means simply pulling down certain levers or marking certain squares. For others, party affiliation may consist in heated arguments n the shop, and a sticker on the car bumper. While for still others party alliance might mean work on a committee or two, and even, perhaps, tanding for precinct delegate to the county convention, or other elective office under the party banner.

All of these are activities which more or less distinctly identify a citizen as the "member" of is party, but they hardly define what such membership is.

There always are, of course, those who want 'arty "membership" *to mean* shouldering responibility for both everything and everyone bearing he party label. Democrats are thus often held esponsible for mink coats, deep freezes, and Walter Reuther; though this form of definition has een less popular since the rise to eminence of nother kind of fur, and warmer and more luxuious accommodations, coupled with some inquiry nto the friends of Mr. Dave Beck. But we will, o doubt, continue to witness the attempt to make unning against Reuther as productive as running gainst Hoover used to be.

And, of course, the voter *is involved* in a certain, f amorphous, responsibility for the conduct of hose he helps elect; and in this sense, the quip In Adams' fall we sinned all," might touch the onscience of some 36 million Americans, just as he indiscretions of certain Truman appointees ight have impinged on a lesser number of moral ensibilities. But the extended discussion of the problem of political responsibility would lead afield from the question, What does it *mean* to be a party member? and so we pass it by.

Party membership means, let us say, the personal endorsement by word and by deed — in the polling booth if nowhere else — of the political program, embodied in the official declarations of the party, and realized more or less completely in the legislative and administrative conduct of those elected on the party ballot.

But, even so defined, party membership is vague, because the wide range of views which find accommodation under either party's main tent are often at variance and sometimes flatly contradictory. Democrats, North, for example, eye Democrats, South, across the color line, as all Republicans know, and some exploit to ends of their own. However, this sharp contradiction is no more surprising, perhaps, when one considers it in the context of the whole party structure, than is the fact that in Holland Kuyper and Colijn could draw *principial* bead on each other across the tariff barriers while remaining in the same political fold.

So, a party "member" endorses what he can of that party's platform and conduct which most wholly embodies his own convictions; and he pledges himself as heartily as does any one of his opponents to modify such principles and practices in his "own" party as he cannot conscientiously abide. No one in any party, probably, can unreservedly support all that is said and done in the name of his party. He approves what he believes in, amends where he is able, and employs his freedom of speech and ballot to support those men who represent most of what he himself would try to be.

In this framework, then, we can return to the point of departure, and explore the two contentions advanced: (1) that Calvin and Calvinism have stood, in general, for state intervention in the socio-economic life (hereafter just *economic*, to save space) of the nation; and (2) that such, in general, has been the stand of the Democratic Party in the USA, and of those Christians who are among its members.

The State and Economic Life

To clarify what follows, it should be pointed out that the state may bear at least three relatively distinct relationships to the economic life of the people: (1) it may act as umpire, only, in matters of dispute, and in restraining violations of the civil and criminal codes; (2) it may act as deliberate regulator of economic enterprise; and (3) it may enter the economic life of the nation as active participant and *entrepeneur*. These three

possibilities shade into each other, and of course the state does not drop the first if it undertakes the second, and so on. Yet they are, I think, distinct enough to demarcate different and often hotly disputed emphases and points of view.

Take this illustration:

The United States postal service is now a government monopoly: as such it represents the active participation of the state in the business of communication. That is the third alternative suggested above.

The mails could, obviously, be handled by private enterprise, as, say, in the days of the pony express, under strict federal regulation of rates, wages, and processing — which would be the second alternative mentioned above.

Or, lastly, mail could be handled on a wholly private and competitive basis by several enterprises, operating under the general police power of the government, and subject only to the laws bearing upon fraud and malpractice. This would be the first alternative.

Calvin and Calvinism

With this illustration in mind, we can now ask, What choice has Calvinism commonly made among these three alternatives: state as umpire, as regulator, as participant?

Perhaps it is well to remind the reader again that such an excursion as this into history has its limitations, and that this fact must be kept in view as we go along. History will not *"prove"* that Calvin would have voted for Wilson, Roosevelt, or Coolidge; but it may suggest reasons for thinking whom he would have chosen, were many factors supposed equal. Nor will history *"demonstrate"* that what was true of Geneva of the sixteenth century, or of England and Scotland and even New England of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or of Holland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, will necessarily be true of the USA in 1958. History will not be our slave in such matters, document or demand though we will.

But, writes Cardinal Newman, in his *Development of Doctrine,* "Bold outlines rise out of the records of the past, when we look to see what it will give up to us; they may be dim, they may be incomplete, but they are definite." And if, in this sense, there is a *discernible tendency,* from the Geneva of Calvin to the program of the Anti-revolutionaire Partij in Holland, to view the relations of state and economic life in terms of one of the three alternatives described before, then we do no injustice to history, nor to truth, to accept that tendency as suggesting a principle valid for Calvinists here and now. To deny the validity of such a conclusion is to undermine historica inference altogether.

What is of importance, too, is the fact that th Geneva of the sixteenth century breathed, eco nomically, modern air. Capitalism and private en terprise were well known there, and business wa not the puzzle to Calvin which it is said alway to have remained to Luther. The "bourgeois re volution" was, by the calculation of some scholar no less than two hundred years on its way b Calvin's time; and he was himself schooled in th legal bases of property, trade, and contract. Which then, of the three alternatives — umpire, regulato participant — represents the relation of state an economic life in Calvin's Geneva?

In Geneva

That the state was umpire there is no doub Writes R. H. Tawney, regarding the work of th Consistory, a body of ministers and laymen, ac ing as religious and civil authority, "It . . . repr mands or fines the merchant who defrauds hi clients, the clothmaker whose stuff is an inch to narrow, the dealer who provides short measure o coal, the butcher who sells meat above the rate fixed by authority, the tailor who charges stranger excessive prices, the surgeon who demands a excessive fee for an operation." These latter thre measures will sound like stepping across the lin into state regulation; and so the Consistory did "It censures harsh creditors, punishes usurer engrossers, and monopolists." The city Counc establishes a bank, regulates rents, controls th price of wine.

No one, it is likely, who is seeking illustration fo the thesis that they govern best who govern lea will turn to Calvin's Geneva. Nor is that school o economic theory which proclaims each one's i violable right to do as He likes with his own, a to find any more support in the practices of Gene than it can discover in the teaching of Calvin.

But did this city also go beyond the second a ternative, strict *regulation* of economic life? did! Writes Dr. H. H. Meeter, "Calvin advocate public loans for the poor and refugee, measur relating to public health, statistical inquiries in the income of districts, the fixing of the price corn and wine and other commodities, the determ nation of a proper rate of interest, and even t ownership and operation by the State of a silk i dustry for the twofold purpose of increasing t revenue of the State and giving added employme to the citizens. In fact, so much social legislati was enacted by the Genevan government at t time and through the influence of Calvin that h government has been termed Christian socialis While the government of Geneva was anticon

munistic — and thus cannot be called socialism as we know it today — it, nevertheless, stressed emphatically the duty of the government to provide for the public welfare in material, cultural, and philanthropic matters."

Were it useful, this quotation might be complemented by others in similar vein from Choisy, Troeltsch, Weber, and more. For the purposes in hand, however, it may be maintained that Calvin's Geneva *regulated* economic life with grim enthusiasm, and crossed the line into *active economic participation* with some abandon.

In England, Scotland, New England

So broad a sweep in geography and in time is little less than undisciplined, but for all that the story is the same. I shall tell it briefly and leave out the details.

Knox, and the Puritans in Scotland and England, hewed much to the same line, though he without real political power and they able to exercise what they preached. In New England, writes Tawney, "naturally the authorities regulated prices, limited the rate of interest, fixed a maximum wage, and whipped incorrigible idlers." They sought also to control profits, and one of the ministers of Boston, sermonizing on nine principles governing trade, gave as the first that it was unlawful to suppose "that a man might sell as dear as he can, and buy as cheap as he can."

Calvinism in England, Scotland, and New England did but echo Geneva. All this, however, was long ago; and came to pass when church and state had hardly been clearly separated. What of the modern world? And we turn, then, to

The Netherlands

Here we find that once more the story is much the same, in an industrial nation in many ways parallel to our own. Whether we select from Professor Diepenhorst's practical exposition of the program of the Calvinistic Antirevolutionaire Partij a list of social legislation endorsed by that party, and largely enacted into law through its influence, a list which reads like a precursor to the Rooseveltian New Deal; or whether we quote from Dr. Meeter's summary of the work of Kuyper and Colijn; or whether we extract from Kuyper or Colijn or Talma themselves; or whether we work back from the volume, *The Responsible Society* (in Dutch), published this very year, we cannot escape the conclusion that Calvinism in the Netherlands has by no means restricted itself to viewing the state as only an umpire over the economic life of the people, but has gone on to the second and third of our alternatives.

Wrote Professor J. Zijlstra of the Free University, now Minister of Economics in the Dutch Cabinet, in 1951: "When in our time defects are seen in the field of economic life we no longer say that such is unavoidable because the economic laws will have it so, but we try to improve things by well-considered measures. Therefore the great question of the moment is, what must be the *contents* of this policy: the *possibility* of a well-considered economic policy is no longer at issue."

"I do not say," Dr. Donner of the Free University, and last year Dutch delegate to the United Nations, argues with the Socialist, N. Stufkens, in a small volume called *Confrontatie*, "that the state may not concern itself with the solutions of all kinds of problems. It is on the contrary clear to me that this must sometimes be the case."

"Charity and social legislation," wrote Professor Diepenhorst, "both have their task."

Again, Calvinism in Holland echoes the thought and practice of Geneva.

A Conclusion

And so, however hastily we have skipped over several centuries, I will quote no more, but will insist that the broad outline is clear: Calvin and Calvinism have seen state and economic life not as enemies, nor as strangers, but as associates in achieving the total welfare of the nation. And in this partnership, the task of the state has been understood to be *umpire, regulator, and participant,* all three, as a need for each became clear.

Calvinism and Capitalism

But perhaps by now the reader who has himself done a little grubbing about in these matters is puzzled. He well remembers reading that it has been the work of men like Weber, Troeltsch, and Tawney—though not entirely in unison—to show that Calvinism and capitalism flourished together not only, but as cause (Calvinism) and effect (capitalism). This conclusion is endorsed by Miss Harkness, though with reservations, after her own survey of the evidence. How is it, then, the question arises, that Calvinism encouraged capitalism, if it stood in fact for state regulation and also for state participation?

The answer is puzzling only to those who mistake economic Liberalism of the *Laissez faire* school for Calvinism. To Calvin it was quite clear, one may conclude, that regulation and intervention by the state, if *controlled* by the concepts of freedom and general welfare, are not harmful but medicinal to capitalist development. Calvin was no enemy to private enterprise. On the contrary, as Troeltsch puts it, "Calvinism . . . is the only form of Christian social doctrine which accepts the basis of the

modern economic situation without reserve." And Tawney adds, "That acceptance of the realities of commercial practice as a starting-point was of momentous importance. It meant that Calvinism and its offshoots took their stand on the side of the activities which were to be most characteristic of the future, and insisted that it was not by renouncing them, but by untiring concentration on the task of using for the glory of God the opportunities which they offered, that the Christian life could and must be lived."

What Calvin embodied in thought and practice was the persuasion that Undisciplined Activity, whether in economic practice or in society at large, led to disaster. To curb excesses by law was clearly the duty of the state; and to extend this discipline to careful state regulation of enterprise was also the practice of Calvin's Geneva. Moreover, the state, in Calvin's time and under the guidance of Calvinists since his time, has moved into economic participation in the national life, where private enterprise has left gaps to be filled or where spirit-maiming burdens might be lifted from the shoulders of the poor and oppressed.

And as a result of reaching and crossing what Tawney calls this "watershed" in the history of religio-politico-economic relationships, wherever Calvinism took root there capitalism flourished. And it flourished, not in spite of Geneva, but in the tradition of Calvin; and, *what is more,* when capitalism over-stepped the bounds set by Geneva and went madly off on its own, it in due season spewed forth Karl Marx!

Our problem, as Christians in politico-economic relationships, is not to escape Calvin, nor to take pains to explain him away under new slogans, but rather it is to take him seriously. So doing is not to abjure all state regulation of, and participation in, economic life, but so to control these activities by religious principle that the general welfare may be promoted, not by hobbling but by developing the creative powers inherent in capitalism itself.

The Democratic Program

This attitude toward state regulation and participation in economic life is, as I view it, implicit in much that the Democratic Party has accomplished since the day of Woodrow Wilson, and more emphatically, since the time of Franklin Roosevelt. Whatever may have been the variety of motives present to the minds of those who shaped the New Deal, there is, I think, clear evidence also of the same apprehension of the relation of state to nation which has characterized Calvinism since the days of Geneva.

And the result has been much the same as those results which attended the progress of Calvinism across Europe and America. The New Deal and Fair Deal did not stifle private enterprise, nor choke the national economy. On the contrary, despite the tremendous energies absorbed by purely military production, the nation has in twenty-five years made strides so gigantic in economic progress that it is not only our grandfather's standards of living which have been revolutionized since 1929, but our own. If the New Deal and the Fair Deal have really been poisonous to free enterprise, then "on what meat," indeed, "doth this colossus feed?"

Let me take a fanciful illustration, rooted in hard fact:

Supposing a man from Mars did really land. And after he had landed, he made inquiry concerning the health of American business. And we explained to him that during the years 1946-1954 (since these are figures I have to hand) the *profits after taxes* of some American concerns totaled as follows: General Foods, $200 million; National Dairy, $260 million; Sears-Roebuck, $1,140 million; General Electric, $1,225 million; U.S. Steel $1,465 million; and General Motors, $4,775 million; while the combined income of all American corporations rose from $22.6 billions in 1946 to $42.5 billions in 1954. What might he say?

I presume that he might at least conclude that the health of the American economy was, so to say, sound and the signs were hopeful.

But this man from Mars has a memory of certain campaign oratory heard on this planet in the 1930's, and he recalls distinctly the dire prediction that if the New Deal were not effaced from the land, grass would in due season flourish on the streets of Detroit. How is this, he will want to know; *was the New Deal undone?* And we explain: No, it was not. And we add that today the labor force exceeds the 60 million jobs predicted so long ago — amid such jeers — by Vice President Wallace. The aged, we explain, now have social security; the unemployed have compensation for a season; savings are protected by law; part of labor has been organized; the minimum wage has risen as the work-week has been reduced; *and the general population lives at a level of luxury never before achieved by any nation!*

I think that the visitor might go back to Mars eager to enact a New Deal into law at home, and wondering not a little at those who still cannot reconcile themselves to it on earth.

Perhaps, on his way home, the Martian dips his saucer over the seven Southern states served by the Tennessee Valley Authority, about which the charges of socialism, creeping socialism, galloping socialism, and sneaking communism have probably echoed to Mars itself. And what does he find?

Well, in 1948 the TVA celebrated its fifteenth

year of service in the Valley. It made a survey of the *private enterprise development* in the seven states served by the TVA system, and this is what it found: from 1933 to 1946, though the whole national economy surged ahead, partly as the result of the war, the rate of progress in the Valley served by TVA far exceeded the national average: 2,100 new private manufacturing enterprises began operation in the Valley between 1933 and 1946, an increase of manufacturing enterprise of 163 percent, as compared with the national average increase for the same period of 95 percent; these enterprises created 288,000 new jobs, an increase of 123 percent as compared with a national average job growth in manufacturing of 73 percent; a million acres of land for private use were terraced, pasturage was increased by 800,000 acres by reclamation projects, livestock holdings went up 9 percent, dairy production increased 22 percent, while the total value of farm products went from $110 millions in 1940 to $274 millions in 1945; tax revenues in all seven Valley states substantially increased, and state indebtedness dropped 25 percent; federal taxes took $2 billions out of the Valley during the fifteen years, while per capita income increased more than 200 percent, double that of the nation; sales in the Valley increased from $272 millions in 1933 to $1,400 millions in 1946, a jump 33 percent greater than the national average for the same period.

In short, the visitor from abroad would find that *private enterprise* of all kinds, far from being crippled by this great federal project, was stimulated to growth and development far beyond the average for the nation at large; to say nothing of the flood control, navigation, reforestation, and general basic economic foundation laid and promoted by TVA.

Whether or not our visitor from Mars whisked off toward home busily formulating plans for a TVA along the famous Martian "canals," we may never learn; but learn we can, that government participation in the economic life of the nation as a whole, or of a region in particular, not only serves the *general* welfare, but as it does so it stimulates the *private* welfare, business, corporate, and personal.

Calvinists and Democrats

This kind of state participation in, and regulation of, economic life a Calvinist not only can endorse, but he can do so standing on a tradition which stems out of Geneva itself. And this kind of participation and regulation is best found, I think, in the program of the Democratic Party. The work of Roosevelt is now commonly understood to have been directed to rehabilitating and redeveloping the American free enterprise system, bitterly as that work was assailed at the time. And I think it may be truly said that what Roosevelt, from his own point of view, like Karl Marx from a quite different point of view, and, again, like John Calvin from his own vantage point — I say, what all of these men clearly understood was that the laws of economics if left uncontrolled by the laws of morality lead to tensions, to chaos, and to the oppression of the poor. And the insight which Roosevelt sought to turn to constructive ends, as Marx sought to turn the same insight to destructive ends, Calvinism had long insisted upon using for the development of private enterprise, namely this insight, that the state is not the enemy of the people but their servant, not their tyrant but their aide, *if properly employed.*

And this leads us to the one common criticism of the Democratic program, namely, that it leads, knowingly or unknowingly, to state socialism and governmental tyranny. That Calvinism opposes this no one doubts. Dr. Meeter stresses that socialism is not the end Calvin had in view; and Dr. Donner, in the colloquy mentioned before, points out that while much of the socialist program might be adopted, without violation of principle, by the Calvinists, there is this inexpungable difference between them: the Calvinist insists that the state, too, is infected with evil, and must be prevented from forging one step further than the situation demands.

This temptation for government to move ahead is real, and those who reckon with it are not only outside the Democratic Party. Indeed, the Democratic Party *has not sought state socialism,* and it is from within the Party that the restraints have been applied, and must continue to be applied. This is all the more true as the initiative for the further development of state and economic relationships continues to rise from Democratic ranks. The temptation to extend the dominion of the state into areas where it need not go is, no doubt, always present. And it is with an eye clear to the threat of this temptation that we should seek the active participation of Calvinists in the formulation of Democratic Party policy and its application in conduct.

For the solution to modern problems is never simple. Economic life might be left to its own, and then Karl Marx would some day meet it on the downhill road. But this *laissez faire* has never been Calvinism's way. Calvinism has stood for active participation by state in national life, with an eye to national welfare. In such participation there are, as I say, risks of over-stepping the bounds. But every virtue has within it the occasion to defects; and *for gain in politics, as in business,* one must run risks. Indeed, living is itself the run-

ning of risks. Our task is to seek the gain, and to guard against the risk; and with an eye alert to this dual responsibility, and acting in the ways opened to us by the blessing of political freedom, we as Calvinists can find a place for service in the Democratic Party, 1958.

And when I think on these things, if you will allow me one half-facetious remark, kind reader, then let me say that when someone asks, "How can you, as a Christian, be a Democrat?" I am tempted to reply, with what I hope is a twinkle in the eye, "How can you, as a Calvinist, be anything else?"

Dooyeweerd on Meaning and Being

by Alvin Plantinga

THERE IS MUCH to admire in Professor Dooyeweerd's Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea. This system is rich and variegated, suggestive and stimulating. Adventurous and bold in the quest for a more profound understanding of the philosophical implications of Christianity, Professor Dooyeweerd does not shrink from criticizing and revising traditional Reformed ways of thinking where it seems to him that they have strayed from the path of truth. And this is as it should be. For a slavish adherence to traditional modes of thought can discourage and stultify intellectual progress. Therefore I hope that the critical character of the following remarks does not suggest that I intend them as an attack upon Professor Dooyeweerd's system as a whole or upon any aspect of it. They are meant solely as elucidatory questions, not as critical conclusions.

TRADITIONAL Christian doctrine has held that God's creation of the world consisted in producing finite beings where there had been (if temporal language is appropriate) only an Infinite Being. After creation there were two kinds of being; and the being of creation, though finite and contingent, was nevertheless thought to be genuine being and genuinely distinct from God. Something like this, I take it, has been the root of Christian opposition to the various forms of pantheism constantly cropping up in the history of philosophy.

In this ascription of *being to* created reality, the tradition, Professor Dooyeweerd believes, has led us astray. He wishes to argue that the term "being" is applicable to God alone; that referring to created reality as "being" is in some way to deify the cosmos and cut it loose from its dependence upon God. "Being is to be ascribed to God, whereas creation has only *meaning*, the dependent mode of reality or existence."[1] My aim is to elucidate this view. The following are capsule statements of it:

> [The] universal character of *referring* and *expressing* which is proper to our entire created cosmos, stamps created reality as *meaning*, in accordance with its dependent non-self-sufficient nature. *Meaning* is the *being* of all that has been *created* and the nature even of our self-hood I, 4).
>
> From the start, however, our inquiries should make clear the ultimate character of meaning as the mode of reality of the whole of creation, which finds no rest in itself (I, 96, 97).

What could be meant by, "Meaning is the being of all that has been created"? We should not be misled by the occurrence of the word "being" in this formula. Here it is clearly equivalent to "existence," "reality," and the like. Dooyeweerd is not of course *denying that created reality exists* or is real. The question he wishes to raise is about its *mode* of existence. Created reality, he says, exists not as being but as meaning. At first sight this is a puzzling assertion. Meaning, as we usually understand it, is a property of sentences, codes, poems, assertions, and (sometimes) events, as when we speak of the meaning of the French Revolution. But in none of these cases is it intelligible to iden

* The reference is to Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd, Professor of Philosophy of Law in the Free University of Amsterdam, who is currently lecturing in this country and in Canada under the auspices of the Reformed Fellowship. With an appeal to the biblical truths of Creation, Fall, and Redemption, and from within the Reformed tradition, Professor Dooyeweerd has fashioned a significant critique of immanence philosophy, and has offered for appraisal a new philosophical construct, a single aspect of which comes under scrutiny in this article. Although the article raises questions about a detail of Professor Dooyeweerd's philosophy, it intends, not to destroy, but only to contribute to the continuing conversation going on within the Reformed community, the purpose of which is to attain to Christian philosophical clarity. Dooyeweerd's own contribution to this conversation is vast and *Journal* readers are encouraged to read his learned and penetrating three-volume work entitled *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. — The Editors.

1. *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, tr. D. H. Freeman H. De Jongste (original title: *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*), 3 vols. Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1953. Vol. I, p. 3. All subsequent quotations are from this work and will be designated in the text by means of page and volume number

fy the meaning of some form of words or some vent with the words or the event itself. I can sk you what you mean by a given statement; but iat the meaning and the statement are not simply ie same thing is clear from the fact that you can xpress your meaning in different words or even a different language. In the case of the meaning f events this is still clearer. Though I can talk f the meaning of the French Revolution, if I ere to insist that the French Revolution itself *ist is* meaning, you would be justifiably mystified. urther, concepts attaching naturally to meanings o not seem to apply intelligibly to things and vents, and vice versa. It seems nonsense, for example, to speak of a meaning six feet long, or raveling at thirty feet per second. Similarly, eanings may be precise, clear, delicate, muddy, dumbrated, concealed, esoteric, etc.; and careful eflection upon these predicates will reveal that the sense they apply to meanings they cannot e attached intelligibly to things or events. What llows is not, of course, that to describe all of reation as meaning is to talk nonsense. But it oes follow that the significance of such an assertion is far from clear. *Whatever* it means to ay "Meaning is the being of all that has been reated," it does not, presumably, mean to deny ir basic and inevitable distinctions between meangs and things.

WHAT *does* it mean then? Perhaps we can get a ue by considering more closely the passages in hich Dooyeweerd denies that created reality has ing. "Being is to be ascribed to God, whereas reation has only *meaning*, the dependent mode of ality or existence." Essential to characterizing reation as meaning, then, is the claim that created ality is in some way *dependent*, presumably upon od. "[The] universal character of referring and xpressing, which is proper to our entire created smos, stamps created reality as meaning,in accordance with its dependent non-self-sufficient ature." Here again the notion of dependence is ntral, and with it are introduced the notions of ferring and expressing. Created reality depends on God, refers to Him, and expresses something - perhaps God's plan or His will. "From the start, owever, our inquiries should make clear the ultiate character of meaning as the mode of reality the whole of creation, which finds no rest in self . . . Only God's Being is not *meaning*, because e alone exists by and through Himself" (I, 96,). Once again the notion of non-self-sufficiency stressed; God's being is not meaning, because e is self-sufficient and independent of what He s created; creation, on the other hand, *is* (rather an *has*) meaning because it lacks this self-sufficiency and independence. So the evidence for the assertion that creation is meaning is the fact that creation is not self-sufficient and that in some way it refers to, points to, its Creator.

It is tempting to think that for Dooyeweerd "Meaning is the being of all that has been created" means simply that created reality is dependent and that it refers to God. So understood, the doctrine that creation is meaning would not add anything to the Christian doctrine of the dependence of creation; it would be no more than a new way of saying the same thing. But then, of course, Dooyeweerd's doctrine becomes (at any rate within the Christian community) a truism rather than a new and startling analysis of created being. For Christians have always held that created reality depends upon God, and they have always held that in some way creation points to, refers to its Creator. Indeed, Thomas Aquinas, for whom Dooyeweerd has some harsh words, would on this interpretation be in solid agreement with the doctrine that created reality is meaning rather than being, for he insisted both that created reality is dependent and not self-sufficient and that it points to God. So on this interpretation Dooyeweerd's doctrine, which looked new and startling, turns into a truism. And it is implausible to suppose that Dooyeweerd meant to announce a truism as a new analysis of created being.

There are further indications that by "meaning is the being of all that has been created" Dooyeweerd means much more than that created reality is dependent upon God and refers to him. For example, he apparently holds that in some sense a creature is a combination of functions (or of functionings) which are themselves sometimes referred to as aspects or levels of meaning. Then there is his rejection of the doctrine of substance, which, he thinks, is intimately connected with the doctrine that created reality is being, rather than meaning. And finally, since the traditional understanding of the dependence and referential character of creation could be expressed by saying that created reality *is* being and *has* meaning (instead of saying that it *is* meaning), Dooyeweerd's rejection of *that* formula also reveals that when he claims created reality is meaning rather than being he means what he says and is not simply expressing an old doctrine in new words.

SO LET US TRY once more to see what is meant by the doctrine that meaning is the being of all that has been created. We might next examine Dooyeweerd's rejection of the view that creation *has*, rather than *is*, meaning. The objection here is as follows: "If created things are only *the bearers of meaning*, they themselves must have another

mode of being different from that of the dependent creaturely existence referring beyond and above itself, and in no way self-sufficient. Then with immanence-philosophy it must be possible *to abstract meaning from reality*" (II, 81). Dooyeweerd seems to be making the following suggestion: if we maintain that created reality *has* meaning and *is* being, then the meaning and the being of created reality are two very different things. And its being, as opposed to its meaning, would no longer refer beyond and above itself, would no longer be dependent upon God. Created reality would then contain two components, being and meaning, and only the one, meaning, would make any reference to God.

But I suggest that this is a specious difficulty. One of the things implied, I suppose, by saying created reality has meaning and refers to God is that created reality is *contingent*. About any created being we can always ask why it is the way it is, and indeed, why it is at all. And ultimately, according to Christian doctrine, the answer will refer to God. But we cannot ask the same kind of question about God. Thus contingent being bears an intrinsic reference to uncontingent, necessary Being. And this is part of what is meant by saying that created reality has meaning. But what could be meant by abstracting this *meaning* of created reality from its *being?* How could we go about that? What would it be like to abstract the contingency of a creature from its being? We perform a Gedanken experiment in which we remove the contingency from a created being and then consider what's left over. But what would be left over? So far as I can see, nothing at all. The contingency of a created being is not like the paint on a table, such that we can remove it in thought and examine the remainder. To remove the contingency of a created being is to remove the being altogether; nothing thinkable would remain. The relation between a thing and its contingency is, if you like, an internal relation; to remove one in thought or in actuality is to remove the other.[2] In fact the root of the whole difficulty is the propensity to think of a thing and its meaning as really two things somehow conjoined. But of course the contingency of a thing is not another thing at all. And hence Dooyeweerd's worry about the danger of abstracting being from meaning seems to be largely misguided. The proper way to skirt that pitfall is not to deny that created reality has being, but instead to avoid thinking of the meaning of a thing as another thing somehow joined to it.

2. Of course I am not suggesting that a creature's being and its contingency are *identical*.

THIS ARGUMENT will not help us then. W are unable to see what Dooyeweerd means asserting that meaning is the mode of being created reality. We might try, next, to get son insight into the doctrine by considering Dooy weerd's response to the objection that "*meani* cannot *live, act, or move*" (I,97). Dooyeweerd r plies as follows: "But is not this life, this actio this movement, with respect to the mode of e istence of created reality, itself meaning, pointi beyond itself, not *coming to rest in itself?* Or God's Being is not *meaning*, because He alo exists by and through Himself" (I,97). In oth words the action, life and movement characte istic of created reality constitute meaning, ref beyond themselves, and are not self-sufficient. B this again seems to be the truistic sense of mea ing, for it shows only that created reality poi beyond itself. And when Dooyeweerd insists th only God has being because only he exists in a through Himself our suspicion of truism is c firmed; if a necessary condition of having bei is existing through oneself, then of course, creati has no being. But in that sense Christian phil ophers have never supposed that it did. Dooy weerd's argument entails that creation is *sign icant*; but it is quite another thing to say that is *significance*.

I began by expressing puzzlement over the d tum that meaning is being of created reality. far we have seen that the sense of "meanin here cannot be any sense with which we are fam iar in ordinary parlance. And in our atten to discover what new sense Dooyeweerd gives this term, we have been frustrated—on the o hand by the suspicion that the doctrine is only a r way of saying that created reality is not self-s ficient, and on the other by the certainty that t truism cannot be Dooyeweerd's meaning.

I SHALL NOW WAIVE (if that is not too weak word) this difficulty and assume that some telligible and non-truistic explication can be giv the doctrine. The point of the view seems to to be the rejection of the philosophical doctrine substance. This, I think, is what really lies beh Dooyeweerd's insistence that meaning is the m of being of created reality. He maintains tha truly Christian philosophy has no place for notion of substance. And what he seems to h in mind here is primarily the Thomistic-Aristo ian conception of substance according to whic substance is a unit of being, a relatively indep dent and persisting entity which may have at butes but is not itself an attribute of any ot being. Such a doctrine has seemed attractive many philosophers because of its use in account

for such things as freedom, causality, activity, personal identity, memory, the unity and integrity enjoyed by the things of common experience, and the like. In particular, most Christian philosophers have been inclined to subscribe to some such doctrine. Why does Dooyeweerd reject substance? He seems to have at least three arguments. One of these is purely philosophical in the sense that it does not depend upon a Christian commitment, while the other two are closely connected with Christian doctrine.

THE FIRST OBJECTION is that a substantialist doctrine cannot account for the unity of our everyday experience. Let me put this doctrine in Dooyeweerd's own words: a doctrine of substance

> is founded in an absolutized theoretical "Gegenstand-relation." "Substances" are opposed as "things in themselves" to human consciousness. They are represented as being quite independent of the latter, independent of possible sensible perception, independent of the theoretical logical function of thought. They are thus excluded from the subject-object relation which is essential to naive experience . . . . While it is acknowledged that human consciousness stands in an intentional relation to the substances, this is considered to be immaterial for the reality of the substances in themselves. This view consequently breaks the integral coherence of all the modal aspects of our experience asunder (II, 11).

Exactly what is the point of this objection? Dooyeweerd apparently objects to the doctrine that knowledge makes no difference to what is known. This, I take it, is the meaning of his strictures on the independence of substances from our noetic functions. And such independence, Dooyeweerd thinks, excludes them from the "subject-object relation which is essential to naive experience" and "breaks the integral coherence of all the modal aspects of our experience asunder." But what reason is there for believing this extraordinary statement? If I hold that trees, for example, are independent of my knowing them, how does this exclude them from the subject object relationship? How does it break up the unity of my experience? Indeed, I should regard it as a virtue of the substance view that it allows us to hold that what is known does not derive its character from being known. Dooyeweerd's view here, as he certainly knows, is a peculiarly modern one which orginated with Kant and is shared by most of the idealisms of present and recent past. But it is a view which has suffered telling criticisms. What about unknown facts in the past, for example? Does the doctrine mean that when there were no (human) knowers there was nothing to be known? Supposing we do not know what Caesar had for breakfast the day he crossed the Rubicon; does this in any way affect the facts concerning that breakfast? The doctrine that the knowing relation is an intrinsic component of what is known is surely implausible, prima facie, at any rate, and to condemn a substance doctrine on these grounds seems very odd. Only one who already had strong idealistic propensities would be inclined to give it any weight at all.

A SECOND OBJECTION, and this time one connected with Christian doctrine, is the following. Dooyeweerd apparently thinks that to attribute substantiality to created being is to set up "an ultimate resting point for theoretical thought within the created cosmos." That is, we are in danger of idolizing some aspect of created reality if we admit that it has the relative self-sufficiency and self-containedness connoted by the idea of substance. Only God is an ultimate resting point for theoretical thought. But *does* the doctrine of substance set up an ultimate resting point for thought within the created world? The self-sufficiency of a created substance is not self-sufficiency over against God, but over against other created beings. All that is meant is that a substance enjoys a mode of being more independent than that of, let us say, a color, which can exist only as a characteristic of a substance. Substances are not as such parts of other created beings and have, therefore, a relative independence as contrasted with attributes and relations. But surely this is no grounds for holding that they constitute an ultimate resting place for theoretical thought. Fundamentally, this objection is a reiteration of the demand that created reality refer beyond itself and that it be contingent. But I fail to see how this demand is in any way compromised by a substantialist doctrine.

THIRDLY, Dooyeweerd objects to the notion of substance or being on the grounds that it necessarily involves "the Greek dialectical religious basic motive of the scholastic metaphysical theory of analogical being and the concept of substance implied in it" (III,73). Dooyeweerd quite correctly insists that the form and matter motive employed in the scholastic analysis of substance is taken from Greek thought, in particular that of Aristotle. And Greek thought, he maintains, is dominated and controlled by religious presuppositions contrary to those of Christianity. Specifically, the philosophical conception of matter and form is a theoretical reflection of Greek religious commitments: it "originated from the encounter of the older pre-Homeric Greek *religion of life* . . . with the later *cultural religion* of the Olympic gods" (I,62). The matter-motive is thus identified with the religious commitment of the pre-Homeric nature religions while the form-motive originates from the religion of form, measure and harmony

characteristic of later Greece. And the philosophical notion of form and matter as used by Plato and Aristotle never freed itself from this religious root. "The autonomy which philosophic theoria demanded, in opposition to popular belief, implied, as we have observed in an earlier context, only an emancipation from the mythological forms which were bound to sensory representation. It did not at all imply a loosening of philosophic thought from the central religious ground-motive which was born out of the encounter of the culture-religion with the older religion of life" (I,62). The notion of substance, then, is ultimately tied up with the basic motive of Greek religion, which was, of course, non-Christian. And hence to employ the notion of substance is in some way to compromise one's Christianity. Such is the argument in brief. But it is surely unconvincing.

For in the first place it is not at all clear that any doctrine of substance necessarily involves the notions of matter and form, at least in the specific and quite technical way in which Thomas and Aristotle developed these notions. And even if this were not so, Dooyeweerd's arguments, consisting as they do in somewhat speculative assertions about the original religious contexts in which these ideas arose, would be inconclusive. Even if it could be shown in convincing detail that the notions of form and matter first arose in the context of Greek religion, it would by no means follow that there is a neccessary logical connection between substance and Greek religion. And how could such a connection be established by historical inquiry? What reason have we to suppose that the taint of Greek religion still lingers about these concepts? We can reach a fair answer only by carefully examining the concepts themselves and the parts they play in post-Greek Christian philosophies such as those of Thomas, Bonaventura, Scotus, and the like. Specifically how, for example, does Thomas fall victim to Greek religion in employing the concepts of matter and form? To chide Thomas for using a concept arising in pagan Greek thought might be like excoriating St. Augustine for writing in a language developed in pagan Rome. I have no time for a full evaluation of Dooyeweerd's mode of argument here. That would lead us to some of the most fundamental questions confronting any attempt at a Christian philosophy. All I wish to say now is that it is extraordinarily difficult to draw a clear distinction between those generally human intellectual products which can be employed fruitfully in such a venture and those which cannot. Surely much of the world's treasures must be appropriated—language is a prime example. And to suppose, as Dooyeweerd seems to, that a doctrine of substance is suspect *just because* it has genetic connections with "the dialectic and religious basic motive of form and matter" is to suppose too much. What we are presently concerned with is the present logical connections of such ideas; their ancestry is interesting, but not in this way relevant.

DOOYEWEERD'S REASONS for rejecting substance, then, are not convincing. But the doctrine that "meaning is the mode of being of created reality" is itself involved in important difficulties. What I say will have to be sketchy, not only because space is limited, but also because, as you remember, we have not yet found an intelligible non-truistic interpretation of this doctrine. The first problem concerns the difficulty of accounting for action, movement, and causation in terms of Dooyeweerd's schema. How can a meaning or a group of meanings be causally active, for example? If someone seriously insisted that he had caught the square root of two on a fishing expedition we should be at a complete loss as to what he was talking about. Similarly, with the suggestion that meanings can move about or be causally active. Perhaps this is clearer with respect to human selves. Let us consider, for example, such a phenomenon as memory. Memory presupposes the temporal persistence of a conscious self from the occurrence of the remembered item to the occurence of the memory. This seems most simply interpreted in terms of a substantial view of the self. But what could be meant by saying that a *meaning* remembers? Similary with such activities as judging. Suppose I judge that the Taj Mahal is more beautiful than Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church. What is it that does the comparing? And in what sense could it be described as meaning or a meaning? What would be meant by such a description? Meanings are the *objects* of judgments; they are not themselves judgers. Again, we maintain that in some sense the self is free. But how can freedom be predicted of meanings? It seems to make no sense to assert that a meaning is either free or not free. It just isn't that sort of thing. All of these phenomena seem to require the assertion that the self is being, and further, that it is some sort of substantial being.

FINALLY, the doctrine that meaning is the mode of being of created reality seems to me to jeopardize the doctrine of creation. For it suggests that the relation between God and creation is like the relation between a mind and the meanings it entertains. I am not, of course, suggesting that Dooyeweerd wishes to hold any such thing; but if

creation is merely meaning it is hard to see how else to understand its relation to God. Now Dooyeweerd rightly rejects any dictation to philosophy on the part of theology; and where he thinks that traditional Reformed thinking deviates from the truth, he does not shrink from suggesting revisions. One of his virtues as a philosopher, I take it, is his refusal to be bound by all the formulae of past Reformed thinking. Still, however, if the total result is to be called a *Christian* philosophy and in particular a *Reformed* philosophy, it must be consistent with the spirit and the main doctrines of the Reformed and Christian tradition. And if his doctrine that meaning is the mode of being of created reality *does* imply that the relation between God and creation is like that between a thinker and the meanings he entertains, then at this point the accusation of a really significant departure from the Reformed and Christian tradition would be justified. For then created reality becomes constitutive of God's mind and thus of God.

And this is clearly to controvert the Christian conception of creation with its ontological chasm between God and created reality. But to have such a chasm seems to presuppose being on the part of creation as well as on the part of God. How, for example, can we conceive of sin in the context of a creature that is merely meaning? Can a meaning sin? What would an evil meaning be like, unless it is thought of as entertained by an evil *being?* The Christian philosopher must steer a nice course between the Scylla of giving finite reality too much self-sufficiency and power, and the Charybdis of altogether divesting creation of distinctness and "over-againstness" with respect to God. The first alternative threatens God's uniqueness and sovereignty; the second courts pantheism. Rightly determined to avoid Scylla, Dooyeweerd steers perilously close to Charybdis; for the very attempt to emphasize God's transcendent uniqueness and sovereignty may end by making him the author of evil in a very intimate sense and by denying an ontological distinction between Creator and creation altogether. Professor Dooyeweerd, we may be sure, is entirely aware of the danger. But in the absence of further elucidation, the dictum that meaning is the mode of being of created reality makes it hard to see how God and creation are to be kept distinct. The difficulty, of course, is with the dictum itself. For so long as we cannot discover more precisely what that dictum means, so long we shall remain in the dark about its precise implications for important Christian doctrines.

We certainly deny not that the Church of God has always existed in the world; for we hear what God promises concerning the perpetuity of the seed of Christ. In this way, too, we deny not that there has been an uninterrupted succession of the Church from the beginning of the gospel even to our day; but we do not concede that it was so fixed to external shows — that it has hitherto always been, and will henceforth always be, in possession of the Bishops. And how, pray, do they prove this to be necessary? No promise can anywhere be found. Nay rather, when Peter admonishes us that there will be false teachers in the Church, as there were among the ancient people, (2 Pet. ii. 1,) *and Paul declares that Antichrist will sit in the temple of God,* (2 Thess. ii.4,) *they point not to foreign enemies who by violent irruption and for a little time disturb the Church: they speak of what is called the ordinary administration of Prelates, that no one might dream of a tranquil and flourishing state of the kingdom of Christ. Therefore, if the Church resides in the successors of the Apostles, let us search for successors among those only who have faithfully handed down their doctrine to posterity.*

—*From* The True Method of Giving Peace to Christendom and Reforming the Church *by John Calvin*

The Revelation in the Garden

by John Weidenaar

GOD'S INTEREST in man appears from the fact that He made man and that He made him after He made everything else. Six times we read in Genesis 1 that God's creative activity pleased Him. He declared that it was good. Before creating man God paused. One gets the impression that a conference was held among the persons in the Trinity. Something special was in the offing. God cast His eyes on all that He had made in the heavens and on the earth, and girded Himself for a supreme effort. He looked at the earth creatures and at the angels and found nothing that measured up to what He had in mind. While making use of all that was available He nevertheless dismissed all possibilities in the then existing creation, looked at Himself, and declared His intention of making man in His own image and after His own likeness. Man is God-like! Then, contemplating the whole of creation with man as its crowning glory, God declared that all He had made was very good. In keeping with His delight in man, God made generous provision for him by blessing him and giving him dominion over all things.

In Genesis 2 the scene shifts. Genesis 1 speaks of two persons, male and female; places man at the end of a process and designates Elohim as the Creator-God. Genesis 2 describes the world as hopefully awaiting the coming of man, reports the initial creation of only one person, places a gap between the creation of the man and the woman, and specifies God as Jehovah, which implies a new relation between God and man. Meanwhile a garden home is provided for Adam, and he is told to till the ground, food and drink is made abundantly available, and reference is made to the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man is no longer merely the end of a process but is viewed as the center of God's creation. His relation to God and the world is indicated. Genesis 1 and 2 are therefore not strictly chronological nor contradictory but evidently complementary.

All this is familiar material, heard in church, Sunday school, and catechism class, or read in private or at the family table for generations. Into the midst of this idyllic sense comes the shattering disclosure and the tragic intrusion of the forbidden fruit and the so-called covenant of works which preceded the fall of man. One asks, Why did God have to spoil it all? For Jehovah God had told man that while he might eat of all the trees in the garden he was strictly forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil under penalty of deat Apparently there is where all the trouble start Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden tree and ar subsequently driven out of their garden home, Cai kills Abel, Lamech prostitutes poetry to proclai wantonly his lust for vengeance, the flood come David confesses that he was born in sin, and Pau goes him one better, or worse, in adjudging the or sin of the one man Adam to be adequate warran for the eternal desolation of the entire race o men. What, then, becomes of God's interest i man?

It would be impertinent at this point to ant cipate the redemption provided by the Christ, ar anachronistic to quote John 3:16. What needs d ing now is to get at the meaning of the probatio ary command. When Adam came forth out of th hand of God he was indeed very good. He wa however, at the beginning and not at the end of th road. He was a creature subject to change, growth and development. He was indeed able not to si as Augustine put it: *posse non peccare;* but he ha not reached the point of *non posse peccare,* i. e not to be able to sin. He did not at the outset po sess eternal life, the gift of immortality. Paul tel us in I Corinthians 15 that Adam became a livin soul, was of the earth, earthy! that flesh and blo such as Adam and we all possess cannot inherit th kingdom of God. As a result Adam would have undergo the mystery of a great change in order t put on immortality.

SINCE THE NATURAL precedes the spiritual (I Co inthians 15:44-46), we could say that Ada in his first stage of development was a naturalis He was formed of the dust of the ground and Go breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. H drank water and ate of the fruit of the trees i the garden to sustain his life. What a time h must have had in the garden! He dug his finge into the soil and watched things grow; he lifte his eyes to the heavens and saw the stars. Ever hour provided a thrilling discovery and every da was an adventure. In replenishing the groun and subduing nature he was engaged in discoverin its secrets. The whole of creation was a revelatio of God to him, for the heavens declare the glor of God and the firmament displays His handiwor (Psalm 19). Adam must have reveled in the ge eral or natural revelation of God. The invisib

hings of God are clearly seen being perceived hrough the things that are made. Adam knew of he everlasting power and divinity of God and felt onstrained to thank and worship God (Romans :20).

Advancing from investigation and experimentation he progressed to the stage of interpretation. God brought cattle, birds, and beasts to Adam and watched "to see what he would call them." In doing so Adam was led pedagogically and psychologically to the realization that he was alone, for here was no helpmeet for him. Thus was born he desire for human companionship and fellowship. Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and when he awakened his dream was fulilled and his desire was realized. The joy of Adam n beholding Eve is expressed in the poem: "This s now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she hall be called Woman because she was taken out f man" (Genesis 2:23). There was a wedding n the garden, for God brought the woman to the nan.

At this moment the life of Adam was enriched ar beyond anything he could have anticipated. For the first time in his life he understood the meaning of friendship, fellowship, and love on a uman level. From his present vantage point all hat preceded faded into relative insignificance by way of comparison. He doubtless thought that the up of pleasure was now filled to the brim and overflowing. Against the background of his previous naturalistic position, Adam now became a humanist, a social being, a covenant man. God was indeed very good to them and life was sweet beyond compare. Jehovah God, who knew the supreme delight of perfect fellowship and lived a life of matchless love within the ever-blessed Trinity, had now by the creation of Eve conferred upon man the creaturely counterpart of the eternal covenantal life which obtains among the persons of the Trinity. It would seem that God had fully exhausted all the possibilities for the happiness of man.

To be sure, we can conceive of the relation of God to man as a purely legal one in which God as the supreme lawgiver issues His commands and man is constrained to obey. We can envisage an ethical relation in which God reveals the way of life and man is bound to walk the path of virtue; but we have not even made a beginning in the appreciation of the essence of religion until we catch a vision of the covenantal relation between God and man! God was not satisfied with a creational relationship to man and He was not contented with being good to man. God took such delight in the man whom He had made in His image that He desired to lavish man with His favor and to ravish man with His love!

Man, however, even as he came sinless out of the hand of the Creator, was too small to bear the weight of the divine favor and love. The covenantal life of Adam and Eve was but a faint reflection in creaturely fashion and upon a human level of the eternal life and fellowship of love which obtains among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It was at the same time calculated to be a necessary preparation in the process God had planned for man. "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man"; these were the things which God prepared for them that love him (I Corinthians 2:9). To attain the magnificent and stupendous goal of the covenant God, living covenantally with the covenant man, God stooped low in infinite condescension and man had to be lifted high in order that his capacities might be multiplied to the highest exponent for the purpose of receiving, appreciating, and enjoying the amazing favor and love of God. It was in order to achieve this exalted purpose that God revealed the probationary command. That is the central meaning of what the Westminster Confession calls the covenant of works and which the Belgic Confession more correctly designates as the commandment of life. In this way Adam, the naturalist and humanist, would become a theist.

Now, if the knowledge of God which Adam obtained naturally, by perceiving God in all the works of His hand and not the least in his own physical, mental, and spiritual constitution, may be called the original general revelation, then it becomes clear that we can view the covenantal revelation of God to Adam in the probationary command as the original special revelation. In agreement therewith we can illustrate the relation and attitude of God to man as follows.

Imagine a mighty king who rules his vast domain with justice and equity and who defends his realm against the onslaught of a mighty foe. In this dominion, far removed from the royal palace, in the outermost reach of the far-flung empire there lives a maiden in the daily task required for her sustenance in a simple rustic home. The maiden knows her king and honors him as her ruler, protector, and provider. Beyond that her knowledge and her interest does not reach. The great king is so far removed from her and is so superior to her that she would be verily transported if only she could catch a glimpse of him at a distance.

Now suppose that this king includes on his tour the hamlet where this maiden lives. Imagine,

moreover, that this great and mighty monarch seeks out the humble abode where she resides, and actually selects this maiden to be his wife! Heretofore she enjoyed the bounty of his goodness at a distance, but now she has become the recipient of his special favor. Do you think the illustration fanciful and far-fetched? Fact is, the distance between God and man, even sinless man, is so infinitely great and so inexpressibly vast that the illustration utterly fails to do justice to the case at hand.

The triune God is the great king and His people are represented by the maiden. Does not Jehovah God call Himself the husband of the people of Israel, and did not Paul teach us that the Lord Jesus views the Church as His bride? Are not the intimate and precious relationships in life — that of husband and wife and parents and children — pressed into service to enable us to appreciate something of what it means that God is for us?

In the light of the twofold relation of God to Adam which we have called the creational and the covenantal, we are able to appreciate the twofold original revelation, namely, the creational or general and the covenantal or special revelation. By virtue of the creational or general revelation Adam was able to know God in all the works of His hand. The world was a great masterpiece which God, the great artist, had made, and Adam beheld its beauty and utility and discerned through it the greatness and goodness of God.

But God also spoke to Adam and it was this speaking in the probationary command that was calculated to open the door leading to the infinitely richer covenantal relation illustrated above. This is what the Heidelberg Catechism refers to when it tells us that God made man in order that he might know God, love God, and live with Him in eternal blessedness. The purpose of the original general revelation, whose language is not heard and in which there is no speech, is to impart knowledge; but the purpose of the original special revelation is that man should have fellowship with God. Observe the emphasis on the original special word-revelation. Emil Brunner in his *The Divine-Human Encounter* writes pertinently:

> Only the Word is able to break through the infinite strangeness and the silent seclusion between persons: the Word unlocks person to person . . . . The Word is the form and the means through which person reveals and gives himself to person, through which, therefore, fellowship between persons is created . . . . Only the Word can put God's will before man in such a way that he is acknowledged as Person, and that man can "react" to it, can answer it in a personal way, that is to say, in the way of decision.

The close connection between the original general and special revelation is shown in that the probationary command makes direct use of the givens in nature, namely, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The proper response of Adam to the command of God was that of full credence, complete obedience, and unconditional submission. With respect to God he was to exercise implicit faith, with reference to himself he was to display self-denial, and with regard to the tempter he had to manifest opposition. He was not to lean upon his own understanding but rather to adopt the motto: "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth."

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not deadly in character nor fatal in effect. Eve observed that the tree was good for food, a delight to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise. No could Adam adopt the experimental method to ascertain whether eating of the tree would bring death. If Adam were to hold that experience is the best teacher, he would soon discover, as he did that it was the worst possible teacher. It was precisely in obedience to God, in the way of faith, in the denial of self, in the rejection of the experimental method, in bringing every thought into captivity, and in opposition to the devil that Adam would have enlarged his heart, multiplied his capacity, and become receptive to the amazing reward and gift of eternal life.

THAT ETERNAL LIFE was actually available in the covenant of life and that it could not be obtained on account of works, nor even on account of obedience, faith, or trust, but ony in the *way* of obedience, faith, and trust — that is abundantly evident. First, we know that Adam at the outset did not possess eternal life; second, we know there were many trees in the garden from which Adam was permitted to eat and that there was also one tree in the midst of the garden called the tree of life. The many trees were obviously meant to provide for Adam's natural life. Therefore the tree of life represented a life that was over and above and beyond the life that Adam possessed. Genesis 3:22 tells us that the tree of life represented living forever. If we view this "living forever" as a mere continuation of the natural life which Adam possessed, we are compelled to attribute magical qualities to the tree of life and we should thereby open the door for the *ex opere operato* conception of the sacraments. The proper alternative is to view the tree of life as the sacrament of eternal life in the covenant of eternal life. Third, eternal life in the nature of the case is always an undeserved and unearned gift because it consists in the

priceless boon of fellowshipping with God. Friendship, fellowship, and love are never bought or sold or earned; they are given. The wages of sin is indeed death but eternal life is everlastingly a gift of God, even in the garden of Eden.

One is therefore flying into the face of incontrovertible facts when one maintains that there was no semblance of the promise of eternal life in the covenant of "works," better, covenant of life. It may be admitted that the promise was not as explicitly stated as was the threat of death in the event of transgression. There was good reason for not specifically mentioning the promise as clearly as the penalty. God did not even have to reveal the penalty. The mere say-so of God not to eat of the forbidden tree was ample warrant for obedience on the part of Adam. That God, nevertheless, mentioned the penalty was an act of kindness to assist Adam in obeying the command. If God had as clearly enunciated the promise of eternal life as He did the penalty of death, the issue would have been obscured and Adam might have been motivated to obey not because of love for God but rather out of regard for the reward. The purpose of the probationary command is exactly stated by James, 1:12: "Blessed is the man that endureth the temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life [i.e., eternal life] which the Lord promised to them that *love* him."

Accordingly, to hold that it was impossible for Adam to obtain eternal life in the garden, in the interest of clearing the road for a better way of salvation through Christ, is to contradict God's declaration that He made man very good. It is to imply that God can be tempted with evil and that His purpose was to have man fall into sin, which is a palpable prostitution of James 1:13. James wrote: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man [i.e., to evil]." To say that man had to sin is a trifling with sin and renders sin necessary. It is equivalent to the introduction of an irreconcilable conflict between God the Creator and God the Savior. It is a negation of the ethical seriousness of the command of God to Adam. It is to destroy the moral character of the universe. It undercuts the very basis upon which Christ, after the coming of sin, did indeed merit salvation for the lost world.

When, as is sometimes the case, this notion is integrated with a speculative view of the eternal decrees of God, it of necessity posits an arbitrary notion of divine sovereignty and holds to the equal ultimacy of election and reprobation. It reduces history to a moving shadow and by that token denies the genuine significance of the Cross of Christ. It fails to explain that the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane had to be followed by the death of the Son of God. It reduces Christianity to an absolutistic monism, and by denying the mystery of sin fails to do justice to the sublime mystery of the love of God in redeeming the world. It will not confess with the apostle Paul: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!"—except at the cost of surreptitiously importing into "For of him, and through him, and unto him are all things" *the origin of sin!* By so doing it would forever silence the doxology of Paul: "To him be the glory forever, Amen!" (Romans 11:33-36).

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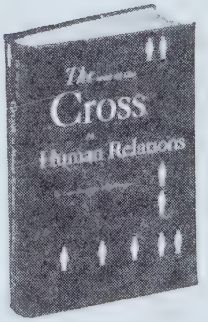

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Scripture and SAASO

by Leonard Verduin

The symbol SAASO (no deprecatory inference intended) stands for Separate and Antithetical Social Organizations, a subject about which there is considerable difference of opinion within the circles served by this journal.

One would expect that when Reformed men try to convince each other on such a matter as the propriety and the necessity of SAASO there would be an abundant reference to the Scriptures which among Reformed people are said to be the final authority in matters of faith and conduct.

There has, however, in the present discussion been very little argument based on hard study of the Word of God. The discussion has been almost completely confined to inference — as, for example, that it speaks for itself that we must have SAASO, seeing that Christ's Kingdom is a *kingdom* and kingdoms are unthinkable without organization. Sometimes *argumentum ad hominem* is resorted to. Such use of Scripture as does take place is usually motivated by a desire to have the Good Book corroborate what we have already been saying, a procedure that is fraught with great danger of wrongly dividing the Word of God. Exegetes of Scripture, even the best of them, usually do their shoddiest work when they go to the Bible merely for corroboration.

Proponents of SAASO have, of course, offered prooftexts. A few of these have been quoted so frequently that men hardly stop to examine any more whether they really have the thrust that is given to them. We wish to take a new look at a few of the texts that have been used in support of SAASO. Since it may perhaps be said that the idea of SAASO is largely the brain-child of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, we do well to take a fresh look at the passages from the Bible with which he was wont to arm himself. And as we do this we may perhaps, for reasons of space available, confine ourselves to a passage that may perhaps be termed the Magna Charta of SAASO, namely, Chapter XIX of Volume III of Kuyper's *Pro Rege*. The chapter has the title: "De Christelijke Organizatie."

We must be aware first of all of the exegetical form displayed by the writer of this chapter. The way in which Kuyper comes to the Scriptures in it may go far to explain how a man who was usually a master exegete could turn out such inferior work. Dr. Kuyper's argument in the chapter before us may well be considered a classic of corroboration-seeking. He begins by asking whether the Christian position, with which he has been engaged, do not imply that Christians "are required to organiz on their own platform, to call into being Christia organizations, in recognition of a clearly define separation that exists between them and the re of society" (translation ours, throughout). H then calls attention to the fact that such separatio has in fact already taken place in The Netherlan as well as in other countries among Catholics. An he adds that this fact does not relieve one of th task of showing the propriety of this separatenes of showing "that in this matter we are on the rig track." And upon that our author informs us th "there happens to be, in First Corinthians, a pa sage that settles the matter [*een apostolische wi spraak die het pleit . . . beslist*]." This passage h thereupon recites and expounds. This is not goo exegetical form. It is corroboration-seeking. H who goes to the Bible this way is almost certain t do violence to it. The history of Bible interpr tation is strewn with frightening examples of wh this method can be made to do.

AND NOW WE TAKE A LOOK at this text which, will be recalled, was by itself said to be co clusive in the matter. It is the well-known "Da any of you, having a matter against another, go law," etc., as given in I Corinthians 6:1-11. F the commonsense reader this passage is whol perspicuous. It teaches us that Christians must n hale fellow believers before the secular courts b rather seek to resolve their difficulties by means the resources for justice that are available *with* the believing fellowship. But Dr. Kuyper, in h ambition to have this text sustain his SAAS program, tells us that in this passage, in spite such difference of opinion as there may be touchi its implications, "The Apostle presses as un quivocally as it is possible for separate orga zations for those who confess the Christ."

With all respect for Kuyper as an exegete and devout Christian we wish to say in the plainest words that as far as we can make out the Apost does nothing of the kind. When he says that Chri tians must not drag each other before the secul courts he says not a word as yet, and we mean n a word, about any supposed duty of organizi SAASO. And that was precisely the *quod est d monstrandum*.

We quietly lay this "prooftext" to one side. does not help us any; because it does not speak the issue. And as we lay it aside we heave a si

of relief that even the most ardent protagonist of SAASO has been unable to take the Grand Old Man seriously at this point. The proposal to organize separate and antithetical courts to serve Christians only and to compete with the courts used by the rest is so innately absurd that this part of *Ons Program* has, happily, been left on the drawing board. We do not mind saying that we hope it stays there.

It seems that Dr. Kuyper himself realized that this his trump card did not turn the trick quite as conclusively, did not *"beslis het pleit,"* as adequately as his brave words might have led us to anticipate. For he seeks to bolster his remarkable interpretation of I Corinthians 6 with a reference to "the context," a context which, says Kuyper, "makes even more secure the certainty of the Apostle's intent." In this "context," Kuyper would have us believe, "the inspired Apostle has treated in a general way the question as to how far believers may or may not go in their association with unbelievers in matters social; touching that issue he had previously warned the Corinthian Church against all unnecessary contact." That brings the great exponent of SAASO to his second "prooftext," namely, "I wrote to you in an epistle not to company with fornicators," etc. (I Cor. 5:9ff.).

LET US SEE how Kuyper makes out this time, in his attempt to get the Bible to endorse his program. The second "prooftext" is not quite so self-evident as was the first. But it is quite within the reach of any commonsense person. It has been rendered, very excellently, in the RSV, with these words: "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men; not at all meaning with the immoral of this world . . . since then you would need to go out of the world. But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber — not even to eat with such a one." For the understanding of this passage the following points must be made: (1) What Paul had written in an earlier letter (earlier than I Corinthians) about "not to company" was by him intended *ad intra,* that is, it was intended to regulate matters *within the church.* (It will be recalled that "companying with fornicators" *within the church* was being condoned in Corinth.) (2) The Corinthians had, mistakenly or perversely, given this *ad intra* directive of Paul an *ad extra* thrust, as though Paul had by his words sought to regulate the policy of Christians toward "those who are outside." (3) The present passage, i.e., I Cor. 5:9-13, was written in order to divest the Corinthians of this their error of construing *ad extra* what had been intended *ad intra.* (4) Paul, in passing, looks long enough in the direction of the erroneous construction put on his earlier words to point out that so construed his words would imply the absurd requirement of migrating out of the world.

From this it is apparent that when Kuyper says that this passage "treats in a general way the question as to how far believers may go in their association with unbelievers" careful exegesis replies that it does nothing of the kind. It deals with the question whether it is tolerable for Christians to fraternize *within the Church* with men who disgrace the bride of Christ. And to that question it says resolutely, "Put away from among you that wicked person." To make this passage do the job Dr. Kuyper wanted done, he had to resurrect the very error for the rebuke of which this passage was written, namely, he had to turn *ad extra* once more what the Apostle has expressly said was not intended *ad extra.* To revive the error for the rebuke of which this passage was written is in itself a grave mistake. It goes to show to what lamentable things even a very dear child of God can come when he goes corroboration-hunting.

We shall let this "prooftext" join its companion of a moment ago, seeing that it also does not speak to the issue, says nothing even remotely related to it — save for the droll remark that if we bend this Scripture as the Corinthians were bending it then we will be faced with the absurd assignment of an exodus from the planet. If this passage has anything to say anent the issue of SAASO it is the broad hint that if the underlying principles of SAASO are taken seriously, and if men are consistent enough to apply them all along the line, nothing less than emigration is indicated.

THERE IS A THIRD PASSAGE from Scripture to which the promoters of SAASO often refer and which Dr. Kuyper in his present argument briefly touches, namely, II Corinthians 6:14, where we read, "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers." Let us take a good look at this "prooftext" also.

People who have already embraced the idea of SAASO and then look around for corroboration have cashed in on this passage from the Bible. It seems so ready-to-hand; especially does it seem to lend itself willingly in defense of the CLA, a specific application of the idea of SAASO. It speaks of a "yoke"; and the concept of "Labor" and that of "yoke" can be easily joined. This done, the moral is obvious: "Don't you dare set your shoulder to the yoke in company with a nonconfessing man as your yoke-fellow!" This is quite patently a case of *argumentum ad hominem;* and we prefer more responsible attempts at learning what it is that the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The Greek verb *heterodzugein* which we encounter in the expression "Be ye not unequally yoked," is

reminiscent, of course, of a quaint Old Testament institution, recorded in Deuteronomy 22:10, where we read: "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." This prohibition occurs in conjunction with certain other prohibitions having the same general thrust. In the same Deuteronomy 22:10 we also read: "Thou shalt not wear a mingled stuff, wool and linen together." This latter prohibition occurs also in Leviticus 19:19 where more of the same kind of legislation is set forth; we read here not only, "There shall not come upon thee a garment of two kinds of stuff mingled together," but also, "Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a different kind; thou shalt not sow thy field with two kinds of seed." Closely related as to intent is the whole clean *vs.* unclean legislation — which, it will be recalled, appears also in the immediate context of the text about "unequal yoking." What Paul was saying with the words "Be ye not unequally yoked" he could also, he felt, put in this formulation: "and touch not the unclean."

What did God intend to say to His people in all this? What was the ideological content of all this imagery? It is quite evident that the idea back of it all was to inculcate a sense of apartheid. No ox and ass together — but apartheid; no fiber of vegetable origin woven together with fiber of animal origin — but apartheid; no field sown with more than one kind of seed — but apartheid; no cross-breeding of animals of separate genera — but apartheid; no clubbing together of animaldom — but apartheid. As in the case of Pharaoh's dreams, so in the case of all this Old Testament material — "the sense is the same."

But specifically what apartheid was intended? Surely not apartheid in the things literally specified; but apartheid in the spiritual realms to which the outward apartheid pointed. And what apartheid in things of the spirit, pray?

The Jews had interpreted the apartheid asked for in this ancient legislation to be apartheid *from people.* They made it mean apartheid from the whole world of the "Goiim," the Gentile peoples; and they had made of all the non-Jew world one mass of "outsiders." They, consistently enough, refused therefore to eat with uncircumcized ones. (Remember how men scolded Jesus and how the disciples chided Peter for doing this?) They detoured the land of the Samaritans, in obedience, as they imagined, to the divine command to "be separate." And they all but stoned Paul to death because of a charge that he had "brought Greeks into the temple." Whenever they came back to the "holy city" (after a lucrative sally into the land of the unclean!) they had to submit to a purification, a spiritual delousing. (Recall that Paul for reasons of tact submitted to this.) This was the Jews' version of faithfulness to the apartheid codes.

It is significant that Jesus did not endorse th interpretation. He talked without any inhibitio to a Samaritan. The plan of redemption did r quire of Him that He confine himself to the "ho terrain" of Israel (He declared that He was n sent but unto the lost sheep of Israel), but He do not seem to have endorsed the current interpret tion of apartheid.

And the Spirit of God had to brain-wash the di ciples in this matter before they could be fit ex cutors of the Great Commission which laid up men the duty of going to "*all* creatures." Peter vision on the housetop (given in preparation for t coming of the Gentile Cornelius), a vision in whi clean *vs.* unclean was the central theme be it o served, was a thrice-repeated repudiation of t apartheid practice which men had devised in ob dience, as they thought, to such divine teachings "Be ye not unequally yoked," etc. And to see ho hard it is to make people let go of an ancient co viction, let it be recalled that Peter not only sa "Nothing doing!" three times over but bac tracked miserably before his as yet unconverte brethren (unconverted in this matter, that is).

Whether separation *from people* was ever God intention we shall not here discuss; perhaps whe dealing with children (or, with His people in t days of their nonage) separation *from people* w a device with which to attain to the real apartheic although it must be added that rebukes for me association with "outsiders" are quite hard to fin Even in the Old Testament the apartheid at whic the Lord was driving was apartheid *from sin;* ce tainly that is the burden of the New Testame version of the apartheid requirement. This is mad quite clear in the sequel of the very passage we a all the while seeking to understand. After recitin some of the Old Testament apartheid legislatio specifically the item about "Be ye not unequall yoked" and the one about "Touch not the unclean and, after a recital of the Old Testament benefi promised on condition of compliance with thes items, the Apostle says, "Let us cleanse ourselve of all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, seein that we have these promises" (II Cor. 7:1). It beyond dispute that the "Be ye not unequally yoked and the "Touch not the unclean" and the "Be y separate" are by the Apostle reaffirmed in th words, "Let us cleanse ourselves of all filthiness o the flesh and of the spirit." This is the New Te tament version of all the apartheid codes of th Old Testament. Clean and unclean is no more mixed cloth we all wear without compunction cross-breeding of animals is done without qualm of conscience; our fields are sown with mixed see if that seems to be profitable (it sometimes is I have observed) — but the assignment to "cleans

ourselves of sin" continues unabated. That was the essence of the prescribed apartheid in the first place. It may be pertinent to point out that Paul also says that; for he tells us that if we practice apartheid in the sense of "cleansing ourselves of all filthiness," then we will be *perfecting holiness*," will be bringing the holiness concept to its mature and adult expression — the same holiness concept that once wore swaddling clothes, back in the days of "Be ye not unequally yoked."

In all seriousness, where does the New Testament say that we must pull away *from people?* Where men gather for the expressed purpose of engaging in sinful activities we must stay away; but wherever they gather for purposes in themselves not illegitimate there we may and must be present. To do less is to withhold from society the leaven at the precise point where it is so sadly needed. And the degree of our faithfulness is by the Lord himself measured by what He sees as He beholds the field *en toto;* a comparatively acceptable tract off in the corner where SAASO members huddle together is not enough. What He sees over the *entire* surface is what He looks at. He will not hold it against us if He sees many ambiguities and positive faults and defects and even sins — unless He is of the opinion that if His people had spoken out more vigorously these defects would have been of lesser proportions. Then, but not until then, does He instruct His recording angel to use the pen that has been dipped in the *red* ink.

ACCORDING TO THIS SAMPLING of the "prooftexts" offered in defense of SAASO it may be said that they are very far from adequate. In our opinion the quest for corroboration has failed.

This should give us pause. For the problem to which SAASO is thought to be the answer has been called, by one of America's younger theologians, "the most difficult problem which the Church of Christ faces at any time of its existence." That problem is the problem as to how to integrate the people of God with people *überhaupt.* It is the problem of how to relate the Redeemed Humanity to humanity as such. If SAASO is indeed the answer to this problem then we might expect rather clear instruction in the Word of God that this is so — which, as we see it, is quite lacking.

There is one happy feature in the present controversy; it is the fact that there is no question among us as to whether there should be integration; about this there is complete unanimity. It is as to the *mode d'integration* that our differences manifest themselves. The problem is stated in the same words by all of us; we differ as to the indicated solution.

BOOK REVIEW

The Conflict with Rome, by G. C. Berkouwer, 319 pp. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958.

Reviewed by GORDON J. SPYKMAN, Minister, Christian Reformed Church, Blenheim, Ontario.

As the title indicates, this book is a *polemic* (from the Greek *polemos*, meaning "war"). In a learned and lively way Rome and the Reformation are lined up anew in that heart-throbbing religious struggle which back in the sixteenth century shook Western Christianity right down to its very foundations. The flames of conflict then kindled burn on with undiminished intensity.

We, the children of the Reformation, lavished with the priceless legacies of a re-discovered evangelical *faith*, have inherited from our spiritual fore-fathers the *controversy* out of which our Reformed faith was born. With the passing years this decisive conflict has lost nothing of its sharp edge. Personalities and positions and perspectives have changed. Yet basically the *problem* remains unchanged. After four centuries we may have succeeded in reconciling ourselves to this frightful rift. Generally we may regard the prolongation of this "parting of the ways" as an historical inevitability. Still, in it all the challenge of this conflict presses itself upon our conscience. Since the Reformation era a number of reactions and shifts and realignments and transpositions and reconstructions have set in, such as Anglicanism, Neo-Protestantism, and Neo-Orthodoxy, sometimes beclouding and confusing the real issues and posing new problems. But essentially the battle-front stands today where it stood four centuries ago. *The conflict with Rome* goes on, demanding today as much as then a reasoned decision between two alternative principles: Rome *or* the Reformation.

This "conflict" compels our attention. It is therefore gratifying to have a work on this subject from the pen of the recognized Reformed scholar, Dr. G. C. Berkouwer. The thoughts pre-

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viously sketched are reflected vividly in Berkouwer's writing.

The book under review is a translation of the original *Conflict met Rome*, which reached the reading public shortly after the close of the war years 1940-45. As the war was breaking out, in 1940, Berkouwer offered the world his two works, *Barthianisme en Katholicisme* and *De Strijd om het Rooms-Katholieke Dogma.* The work before us is, however, his most full-orbed work in this field. The author is not only recognized in Reformed and wider Protestant circles as an outstanding participant in the Rome-Reformation "conflict." He is also highly respected as an able opponent by many Roman Catholic scholars, who will at times even venture an appreciative word for his strong emphasis on *faith* in justification and sanctification.

This book is not a monologue. It is not a one-way conversation, in which the opponent is muzzled and made to listen to a barrage of loaded accusations. Indeed, past writings have taught us not to expect such tactics from Berkouwer. This "conflict" is in the full sense of the word a *confrontation* with the true genius of Roman Catholic dogma. The writer gives unmistakable evidence of having taken a good long look at Rome before entering this encounter, a look which must have ripened through first-hand contact with Roman Catholic thinkers. He is careful to avoid all "straw-man" polemics, eschewing every possible misrepresentation and caricature. He allows his opponents to speak freely and frankly. His approach is characterized by a scrupulous attempt at being fair and honest — "almost too fair," one reviewer comments. One cannot help feeling that Berkouwer has succeeded in getting beneath the skin of the Roman Catholic mind. He has learned to see it "from the inside out," being thus the better qualified to step outside and evaluate it objectively in a most thorough-going and devastating fashion. He has gone down into it and come up with the right answer.

Berkouwer's study bears quite understandably the marks of Continental scholarship, which means among other things brushing shoulders at close range with those of radically differing theologies. These living contacts, leading as they inevitably do to spirited conflicts, presuppose a willingness to regard the criticisms of self by others as an occasion for earnest self-examination. This attitude pervades the pages of this work. Accordingly, this "conflict" becomes an encounter, a confrontation, a mirror, often reflecting the failures and sins and limitations of Protestantism itself. In the white hot crucible of this "conflict," which consumes the dross not only of Rome but also of the Reformation, the author feels constrained to break down Protestantism into its various component parts, in order to set off the Reformed-Calvinistic faith from that of Lutheranism, Anabaptism, Neo-Protestantism and Neo-Orthodoxy.

Amid this confusion, and faced with the difficult dilemma between "optimism" and "pessimism" regarding the value of further discussion between Rome and the Reformation, Berkouwer posits the necessity of continuing the "conflict," precisely because the power of the Gospel is not bound. For the Word of God is an irresistible sword cutting through the closed systems of antithetical theologies. Therefore the door must always be left open for *symposium* after *symposium.*

Berkouwer's polemic is a confirmation of the value and beauty of the axiom that dogmatics must find its roots in exegesis. In masterly fashion he interweaves the two. This approach lends great weight to his argumentation, and makes his central motif in this "conflict" stand out in bold relief, namely, *the sovereignty of divine grace.* Sin and grace — a right understanding of both and the triumph of grace — that is the heart of the matter. Having thus reduced the "conflict" to its proper Biblical proportions, Berkouwer finds it easy to end discourse after discourse on a pure and simple evangelical note.

It is not the author's intent in this work to discuss the full range of Roman Catholic dogma. Expertly he selects those crucial issues which open up the depth of the "conflict." In ten chapters, plus footnotes at the rear, he proceeds to explicate these cardinal issues, always viewing them against the deeper background of the total conflict.

Through it all Berkouwer makes clear that "the conflict with Rome" was not merely an incidental and unfortunate chapter in Church History, which might have been resolved with a little mutual understanding and good will. For both Rome and the Reformation it was a question of to be or not to be.

Can the gulf be bridged? In many ways the chasm between Rome and the Reformation has widened and deepened since the sixteenth century. Rome has relentlessly drawn out the consequences of its prior commitments. Through bulls and encyclicals it has never hesitated to reassert its *anathemas.* On the other hand, Protestantism has repeatedly drifted off into doctrinal polyglot and has allowed itself to be torn asunder almost beyond recognition by a merciless sectarianism. All this has served to convince Rome even more of the basic error of the Reformation and of the holy righteousness with which it condemned the Reformers as schismatics and heretics. Add to this the growing demonization of life and the surging tide of modern secularism, then you will understand something of the utter difficulty and frustration in trying to find "points of contact." Matters are further complicated by the more recent developments in Roman Catholic dogma: the immaculate conception in 1854, the papal infallibility in 1870, and the heavenly ascension of Mary in 1950.

Nevertheless, without caricature, and without anti-papistic attitudes, and without a static *a priori* prejudice which excludes fruitful discussion, the meeting of minds must continue.